PRESS RELEASE

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EU funding allocation to R&I in plant breeding has been going down despite a 42% increase of total funds for Horizon Europe compared to Framework Programme 7

Plants for the Future published today a report outlining the **trends in European public investment in plant breeding R&I from FP7 to the first half of Horizon Europe**. The report identified a total of 235 plant breeding-related projects since 2007, mostly funded under the Agrifood, European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) subprogrammes.

Despite funding for the entire Framework Programme (FP) having increased by 42% in Horizon Europe compared to FP7, funding allocation for R&I in plant breeding has been decreasing. The decline is most noticeable in fundamental research and training of the next generation of researchers and entrepreneurs, raising concerns about the continuity of the R&I cycle.

Results show that plant breeding-related projects, funded under the Agrifood subprogramme, have become more complex, requiring bigger, multidisciplinary consortia, but the budgets per project have not increased.

While involvement of the private sector in plant breeding R&I has increased for each FP, it still lagged behind the average for the entire FP in Horizon 2020.

Of particular concern, is **the loss of momentum in the use of plant breeding innovation** observed in Horizon Europe compared to Horizon 2020. The use of classical genetic modification (GM) has been almost completely phased out, while the use of New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) is not fully replacing it. **This is a direct result of more restrictive wording in research calls, as well as the still uncertain regulatory environment for NGT plants**. In order to turn this trend around, and avoid falling further behind the EU's competitors, an enabling regulation for NGT plants should be adopted as soon as possible, and call texts should not restrict the tools used to reach a solution.

Many recent reports, particularly The Strategic Dialogue for the Future of Agriculture[1], The future of European competitiveness[2], Align, Act, Accelerate[3], and the Communication of Biotechnology and

[1] Report on the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture (2024)
[2] The future of European competitiveness - A competitiveness strategy for Europe (2024)
[3] Align, act, accelerate - Research, technology and innovation to boost European competitiveness (2024)

Biomanufacturing[4], highlight the need to create a conducive environment to better leverage the outcomes of EU R&I. The EU has a high level of scientific excellence, but much of the benefits of that research is currently being exploited outside the EU.

"*Plant breeding is the heart of our agrifood systems and contributes to addressing challenges across the value chain and at the consumer level. To further leverage its full potential,* ***there is an urgent need to develop a dedicated mechanism to support R&I in plant breeding in a strategic and coordinated way across the entire EU. This mechanism should also ensure the implementation of research outcomes by promoting partnerships and collaborations between the public and private sectors.*** *We hope this report will help address these gaps and recognise the essential role of plant breeding in our agrifood systems.*" says Amrit Nanda, Executive Manager of Plants for the Future.

Read the full report here.

Plants for the Future ETP (Plant ETP) is a multi-stakeholder European Technology Platform representing the plant sector, from the seed and breeding sector, the farming community and academia. Plant ETP brings stakeholders from the plant sector together to consider the challenges and opportunities of agricultural value chains in a holistic way, while developing a vision for future systems spanning food, feed, and biobased raw materials. In this way, Plant ETP provides strategic direction, recommendations of essential research and innovation, and science-based advice for the benefit of policymakers, research funding providers, practitioners, and innovators throughout agricultural value chains.

[4] Building the future with nature: Boosting Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing in the EU (2024)